Some Kind of Hunter
by Megan Grumbling

He coaxed a pregnant woman right across the river, and it weren’t no easy bridge. A cousin of an in-law, broke as dirt, she come up visiting from Vermont too poor to buy a license. Booker paid it, set a rifle in her hands, and took her up to Perkinstown, the brook side, where they come upon this bridge, just beams and cables, rough. Full six months big, a borrowed gun; to her, that span, it looked like one hell of a stunt when Booker brought her up to it, said, Look, you’ve gotta cross that river on them wires. Now, Booker’s gone these routes, matters of course, for quite a while, and spares no care or feat — hauls moose out of the woods in split canoes, checks hoofprints in the gravel pit’s pale sand most every morning, seeing where they cross. A deer makes no more noise than shadow does, he told his novice kin, and knows the sound by going over into silence, deep, and back, more than a couple times. So when he led this woman, large with child, up to the bridge, and she replied, Oh no – I can’t do that, he tried to make her see the other side. You gotta, Booker said, or else what kind of hunter are you? Well, that settled things. Their bridge stretched lean but held, across the way. She took hold of the cables, hand to steel, and cradling that gun close, she went across.